



## EQIP Activity Sheet: *EAS645-1* Quail Habitat Bundle Incentive

### Minimum Criteria to Qualify for EQIP Quail Bundle Incentive

- 1. In each field or 40 acre block – (A) create/maintain 30 ft. field borders of native grass/forb mix around entire perimeter, or (B) at least 10% of the field if less than entire field buffered or for fields less than 40 acres.**

Suggested mix where concentrated flow is not a concern. Add 3.0 lbs PLS of approved native forbs\* to the following planting:

Little Bluestem	2.7 lbs PLS
Sideoats Grama	1.4 lbs PLS

Suggested mix where concentrated flow is a concern or on soils determined to be highly erodible land (HEL). Add 3.0 lbs PLS of approved native forbs\* to the following planting:

Little Bluestem	2.7 lbs PLS
Sideoats Grama	1.4 lbs PLS
Alfalfa	2.0 lbs PLS

Suggested mix for pasture suitability groups WLB, WLO, WCB, WCU, and WtP (contact your local NRCS office for pasture suitability group information). Add 3.0 lbs PLS of approved native forbs\* to the following planting:

Switchgrass	3.4 lbs PLS
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\*The forb requirement for all mixes must contain a minimum of ten forb species with no single species to exceed 15% of the mix and the mix having no more than 15% annuals/biennials combined. See NRCS Standard 643 - Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats for forb species listing –

<http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/MO/643MOJAN2005ab.pdf>

- 2. 0.1 acre of dense shrubby cover per 40 acres immediately adjacent to the field borders. Achieve by (A) planting or renovating existing covey headquarters, (B) edge feathering according to specifications, or (C) Downed Tree Structure (choose one or a combination to reach the 0.1 acre of dense shrubby cover).**

### SPECIFICATIONS FOR COVEYHEADQUARTERS:

- Minimum of 0.1 acre Covey Headquarter per 5-40 acres adjacent to wildlife friendly grasses/legumes and tilled soil. For greatest quail habitat gains, distribute the 0.1 acre into three separate 30' X 50' areas.
- Remove trees over 12' high that overtop the shrubby area to maintain natural headquarters.
- Edge feathering can be used in areas of older trees to restore/enhance shrubby habitats.
- Headquarters shrub plantings should be at least 1,500 ft<sup>2</sup> (30 ft. X 50 ft.)
- Plant each 1500 square foot area with shrub seedlings at 5 feet spacing (77 bareroot shrub seedlings) or 40 container grown plants at 7 feet spacing.
- Plant bare root or container grown stock.
  - Preferred species include: gray or roughleaf dogwood, American or Chickasaw plum, blackberry, false indigo bush, or shrub lespedeza (shrub lespedeza is easily established from seed).
  - Other good species include: hazelnut, elderberry, chokecherry, nannyberry, witch hazel, or aromatic sumac. A mix of species provides vegetative diversity.



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- If deer damage is a concern, the following species are recommended – false indigo bush, shrub lespedeza (*Lespedeza thunbergii*), aromatic sumac, and blackberry. If other species are planted in areas of high deer populations use deer damage protection techniques. Consult your local USDA office.
- Entire planting area needs to be free of existing vegetation. Remove unwanted cover either by disking or chemical treatment during the fall prior to shrub planting.
- Prior to spring shrub planting, broadcast ladino clover at 3.0 PLS lbs/ac or red clover at 6.1 PLS lbs/ac to suppress annual weeds in the planting area; or the shrub planting area may also be sprayed with an approved herbicide for at least two growing seasons after planting.

### SPECIFICATIONS FOR EDGEFEATHERING:

- Provide 0.1 acre of edge feathering for every 10-40 acres managed for quail. These edge feathered areas should potentially have a covey for each area, if all the other components of quail habitat are present within 150 feet of the edge feathering.
- Cut all large trees within 30 feet of the edge. Treat stumps with an approved herbicide. Leave native shrubs like dogwood or plum. You can drop the trees and let them lie, cut the logs for firewood or build brush piles for rabbits. **DO NOT STACK TREES INTO A TIGHT BRUSHPILE.** Within one year, a variety of shrubs, vines, and seed-producing plants will be growing and providing cover for quail and other wildlife. Drop trees parallel to the fence line/field edge.
- Edges treated for quail habitat need to be at least 50 feet long and spaced at least every 150 feet along the edge of fields.
- If sod-forming grass is present, kill it with an approved contact herbicide before cutting trees. This provides good growing conditions for annual food plants and shrubs.

### SPECIFICATIONS FOR DOWNED TREE STRUCTURES:

Place at least 3 downed trees structures for each 40 acres of cropland /pastureland.

- Place at least 3 downed trees in each structure. Downed trees should be a minimum of 20 feet in height and well branched.
- Downed trees should not be pushed into dense piles. Do not create small, dense brush piles. Simply drag the downed trees into a loose arrangement.
- Structures should be placed on bare ground or on areas where herbaceous vegetation is controlled. Oak, hickory, cedar and hedge make good downed tree structures.

### **3. Complete eradication of fescue and/or brome in field border and in dense shrubby cover area.**

**Glyphosate, Sulfosate, or any generic versions** applied in the fall will control 95% of tall fescue and smooth brome. See label instructions.



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### 4. Prescribed burning or light disking of field borders once every 3 - 5 years (choose one).

#### SPECIFICATIONS FOR LIGHT DISKING:

- The disking should be 2 to 4 inches deep and provide 30-70 percent bare ground.
- Rotate disked strips (maximum 75 feet wide) with undisked strips (two times the disked width) across the border area.
- Disking should be done between July 16 and April 30. Late summer/fall disking favors broadleaves; spring disking favors weedy grasses. Do not disk in areas with historic noxious weed problems or areas of concentrated flow.

#### SPECIFICATIONS FOR PRESCRIBED BURNING:

- Burning should be managed with consideration for wildlife needs such as nesting and feeding cover.
- For greatest wildlife benefit native warm season grass should be burned between July 16 and March 15. Burn no more than 1/3 of field border acres in any one year.
- Burn the area on a three-to-five year cycle to control woody encroachment. When burning to control undesirable sprouting woody vegetation, it may be necessary to burn two or more consecutive years.

#### SPECIFICATIONS FOR UNDESIRABLE SPECIES ERADICATION:

It may be necessary to retreat invasion of fescue or smooth brome in the field border or adjacent areas every 3 - 5 years. Follow directions in #3 after native grasses have gone dormant or shrubs have lost leaves, when fescue is 8-10" tall and actively growing (60-70 degrees air temperature).

#### **ADDITIONAL Minimum Criteria to qualify for the EQIP Quail Grassland Bundle ONLY:**

- Border areas - maintain a minimum vegetation height of 8-10 inches year round; no grazing May 1 through July 15; no haying or mowing; exclude livestock from border areas with fencing OR fence border areas and include as prescribed in grazing plan for habitat benefits. Grazing of borders allowed only as a tool to improve/maintain habitat conditions – consult with NRCS Area Biologist if borders are to be grazed. Shrubby cover areas must be protected from livestock if border is grazed.

*For additional information contact your local USDA Service Center.*

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